

4 November 1966

The Honorable Robert S. McNamara
The Secretary of Defense
Washington, D. C.

Dear Bob:

I transmit herewith five copies of our memorandum, The Effectiveness of the Rolling Thunder Program in North Vietnam, 1 January-30 September 1966, in response to your recent request.

The principal conclusions of our study are:

1. The far greater emphasis on armed reconnaissance strikes in 1966, as opposed to initial attacks on fixed targets, has somewhat lowered the cost effectiveness of the air campaign compared to 1965.
2. The North Vietnamese have learned to cope successfully with the damage caused by air strikes, aided very materially by imports of military and economic goods from the USSR and Communist China.
3. While Rolling Thunder has caused no perceptible weakening in the will of Hanoi to continue the war, the program represents a form of leverage against the regime and perhaps a cause of worry because of the threat of further escalation.

This memorandum will be followed by a more comprehensive study in about 30 days, in which a much fuller

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analysis will be given to certain key questions such as third country attitudes. As you requested, we shall update our analysis at three-month intervals.

We have made no other external distribution of this memorandum, but copies are available for the President and other senior officials as soon as you want them released. It would be appreciated if you would inform [redacted] who in turn will be in touch with appropriate officers in the Agency for this purpose.

Sincerely,

/s/ Richard Helms
Richard Helms
Director

Attachments: a/s

[redacted]
by Nos. 1-5

Entered in by DDI: R. J. Smith
Date — 11-4-66

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